



NATIONAL
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**NOAA Fisheries Determines North American Green Sturgeon
Does Not Warrant Listing Under the Endangered Species Act**

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) has determined that the North American green sturgeon (*Acipenser medirostris*), is not in danger of extinction or likely to become so in the foreseeable future and therefore does not qualify as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is an agency of the Commerce Department.

The green sturgeon is a large anadromous bottom-dwelling fish that ranges from Alaska to Mexico in marine waters and forages in estuaries and bays from San Francisco Bay to British Columbia.

"We identified the existence of two distinct population segments of green sturgeon and based on a review of the best available data, neither appear to be declining in population numbers or are in danger of extinction," Dr. Bill Hogarth, NOAA Fisheries Assistant Administrator. "However, we will continue to monitor the well-being of the green sturgeon by keeping it on our candidate species list and reviewing its status again in five years, if information warrants."

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In June 2001, the Environmental Protection Information Center, the Center for Biological Diversity, and the Waterkeepers Northern California petitioned NOAA Fisheries to list the green sturgeon as endangered or threatened throughout its range, and to designate critical habitat under the ESA. The ESA defines an endangered species as “any species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.” A threatened species is defined as “any species which is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.”

In December 2001, NOAA Fisheries found that the petition to list the green sturgeon contained substantial information that warranted further examination and initiated a comprehensive review on the status of the species. NOAA Fisheries solicited information and comments pertaining to this species from the public and established a Biological Review Team (BRT) to examine the available data.

The BRT was composed of scientists from the agency’s Southwest Fisheries Science Center, Northwest Fisheries Science Center, and the U.S. Geological Survey. The BRT examined all the available scientific information provided by the public and other interested parties including input and comments by state and tribal co-managers in California, Oregon, and Washington. The BRT made several findings and recommendations that include:

- There are two identified distinct population segments of green sturgeon. One is the northern population found north of the Eel River along the coast, and the other is the southern population that includes any coastal or Central Valley populations south of the Eel River, with the only known population to exist in the Sacramento River.
- The majority of the BRT agreed that there is not sufficient information showing that either population segment is in danger of extinction or likely to become so in the foreseeable future based on the available information.
- Uncertainties remain about the exact status of the populations, and concerns remain about the threats they face.
- There is a critical need to monitor population trends and identify potential risks to the species.
- Both population segments of green sturgeon will be placed on NOAA Fisheries' Candidate Species List and its status re-assessed within five years, if information warrants.

Green sturgeon is a long-lived, slow-growing fish and is the most marine oriented of the sturgeon species. There is evidence that green sturgeon spawn in the Klamath-Trinity, Sacramento and Rogue Rivers, with most of the spawning thought to occur in the Klamath-Trinity River. The green sturgeon is usually caught as “by-catch” during commercial, recreational, or tribal fishery activities.

NOAA Fisheries is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation’s living marine resources through scientific research, management, enforcement, and the conservation of marine mammals and other protected marine species and their habitat.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of the nation’s coastal and marine resources.

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